AN ESSAY ON NOTHING.

A DISCOURSE delivered in A SOCIETY.

——Nos Hæc novimus esse nihil. MART.

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ERRATA.

P. 7. For breaſts *read* breaſt. For inſpire *read* inſpires. For redias *read* redeas. P. 51. For ſurround *read* ſurrounds. P. 71. delete *in* after converſant.

PREFACE.

I Acknowledge without affectation, that I think this child, whom I am about to uſher into the world, well made, handſome and ſprightly. I am ſenſible however of the blindneſs and fond partiality of a father, and that the public alone are proper judges of his merit; leſt, therefore, it ſhould be diſcovered that my favourite child is lame and deformed, my parental affection has furniſhed him with a couple of ſtilts, to enable him to hobble through the world with tolerable grace.

Theſe ſtilts are a Preface and Dedication; I reflected that a diſcourſe without a preface is like a ſeſſion of Parliament

Parliament without a ſpeech from the throne, a funeral without mourners, a ſermon without a text, a dinner without a grace, a bumper without a toaſt, and, what comes ſtill nearer our purpoſe, a play without a prologue.

I have conſidered the motives which induce authors to put prefaces to their works; they are, I apprehend as follows: An intention to ſpin out the performance, an apology for its length, or an explanation of the Author's views, in giving his work to the publick. Theſe views are on every occaſion the moſt candid and liberal imaginable, without deſire of recompenſe, or gratification of vanity, with-

without hope of preferment, or ambition of applauſe; the author, merely from an inclination to promote ſome public benefit, plods over muſty volumes, hunts through indexes, ſpends watchful nights in racking his dull brains, writes, corrects, tranſlates, compiles, alters, expunges, inſerts, copies, pilfers, and lies. But as it may be laid down as a maxim which we ſhould ever have in mind, 'That teſtimonies in our own behalf, when unſupported by evidence, nine times out of ten *are falſe*;' ſo authors in general, far from being capable of ſuch exalted motives, are a proud, opinionative, ſelfiſh, ignorant, illiberal, thieviſh, and beggarly race.

It

It may be expected that I ſhould here explain the motives that induced me to publiſh the following eſſay; but, as I wiſh to leave ſomething to the ſagacity of the *kind and gentle reader*, I deſire that he will peruſe this performance, and, if he ſhall then be of opinion that there were not motives ſufficient to induce me to publiſh it, I make him heartily welcome to damn it to the temple of Cloacina, or the bottomleſs pit. I alſo give him liberty to beſtow as many curſes, and as foul reproach upon me as volubility of tongue can utter, or ſtrength of imagination invent; and to hint with a ſhrug and a nod of infinite ſagacity, that this

this diſcourſe which he has damned, is a prototype and forerunner of the fate of its author.

I do not communicate this treatiſe to promote *directly* piety, morality, meekneſs, moderation, candour, ſimplicity, liberality, knowledge, or truth; but *indirectly*, by attempting to expoſe and to laſh pride, pedantry, violence, perſecution, affectation, ignorance, impudence, abſurdity, falſehood, and vice.

Beſide the ſtilts of preface and dedication, I intended to have procured ſome recommendatory verſes, which may be called, 'Paſſports for begging civility and favour from the *Chriſtian reader*.' But, as I know no perſon

perſon living (at leaſt in the Britiſh realms) who is endued with any ſhare of poetic fire, and beſides am perſuaded, if there were any ſuch, none of them would be ſo fool-hardy as to recommend this performance, I hope, inſtead of theſe, the reader will accept the following verſes written in praiſe of this performance by myſelf. This practice, I aſſure him, has by no means novelty to recommend it, although it has not hitherto been openly avowed.

Three ſages in three learned ages born,
Three different poliſhed ſtages did adorn,
In dreams and propheſies the firſt excelled;
With pies and tarts the next his pages ſwelled;
His high dreſſed diſhes praiſed in loud bombaſt:
But I, In Nothing, have them all ſurpaſs'd.

TO

The Moſt MIGHTY and

TREMENDOUS POTENTATE

OBLIVION,

Who lived and reigned from the earlieſt ages, and whoſe Empire ſhall continue World without end,

This ESSAY

Is, with deep Humility, conſigned.

DREAD SIR,

ALTHO' for a fleeting period, my fame may exte nd itſelf beyond thy empire; yet I am

A daily

daily and hourly drawing nearer thine awful preſence. Suffer me to proſtrate myſelf and my work before thee with veneration, accompanied with horror, and to explain with a ſincerity to which royal ears are unaccuſtomed, the motives to this extraordinary addreſs.

If then thy awful Majeſty will ſpare truth and honeſty, although profeſſing to hold thee in abhorrence, know that I adore thee for the ſame reaſon that many people worſhip falſe gods; not from love, but from fear.

As

As the proſpect of approaching death inſpires religious ſentiments into the breaſts of the devotee; ſo the dread of ſuddèn death, and perhaps of damnation alſo to my works, inſpire me with the moſt devout intreaties, that thou wouldeſt *ſpare thy people.* But, if oblivion be the only Elyſium I can hope for; mayeſt thou addreſs me in words ſuch as theſe:

'Serus in cœlum redias; diuque
'Lætus interſis populo Quirini.'

The

The extending my fame will enlarge thy empire; for, if I am widely exempted from thy juriſdiction, the more glorious will be thy late, yet certain victory. Even Homer, Alexander, and Mahommed, ſhall bow beneath thine iron hand.

To trace thine origin is difficult, to enumerate thine allies diſgraceful, to celebrate thy victories impoſſible. In room of theſe, ſuffer me, Dread Sir, to deſcribe a viſion which made me ſhudder at thy terrific preſence.

Veiled

Veiled in a dark robe, thy huge unmeaſurable ſhape floated before me; I could not aſcertain the diſtance between thee and thy ſurrounding objects; if I varied my poſition in the leaſt, from thinking thee at a vaſt diſtance, I beheld thee cloſe at hand. Miſts hovered round thy hoary head, and falling in gentle dew on the children of ſorrow, ſoothed their corroding cares, and bitter anguiſh. Thy mouth opened; I expected that a loud voice would have burſt the vault of heaven; but the moſt ſtill

and

and awful ſilence reigned. A ſwarm of moths iſſued from thy mouth, and left neither green herb in the field, nor ſumptuous array, the emblem of ancient royalty, in the wardrobe. Worms iſſued from thy loins, and yawning graves ſurrounded thy diſmal temple. Thy right hand wielded a horrid ſcythe, thy left held a ſhaggy ſpunge, and aiming at univerſal empire, thine ample foot cruſhed innumerable ages and worlds; equally regardleſs, thou trampledſt upon thrones, and upon altars. An innumerable hoſt,

the

the engine of thy conqueſts, were aſſembled around thee, and I could read on their banners in a legible, though confuſed character, IGNORANCE, WEAKNESS, SLEEP, MORTALITY, DRUNKENNESS, and ENVY. Thou and thy hoſt were drawn up in battle array, ye marched to encounter a terrible foe. Immortality, Memory, and Hope, with ſtrong preſages of victory, led forth their joyful troops to extinguiſh thy gloomy reign. My heart throbbed with the warmeſt expectations; but the ſhouts of contending hoſts, and

the

the thick ſmoke of battle, diſpelled the viſion.

I ſhall make no apology for diſturbing thy ſacred repoſe, as I am perſuaded that the public opinion will entirely concur with mine in the propriety of dedicating this performance to OBLIVION.

AN

ESSAY

ON

NOTHING.

I Have choſen for this night's entertainment a ſubject of great importance, a field ſo wide that it has been thought by many to com-

prehend all nature; but, like moſt intereſting ſubjects, the opinions of philoſophers have by no means been conſiſtent and uniform concerning it.

This I reckon a conſiderable advantage, and it truly was an urgent motive inducing me to entertain this profound audience with my notions upon it, as I ſhall thereby have occaſion to diſplay my ingenuity in ſupporting that ſide of the queſtion which I ſhall chuſe to embrace; or, perhaps, following the laudable example ſet me by thoſe learned gentlemen, who, finding one ſide of a queſtion too narrow for

for their unbounded genius, or who, being perplexed by the natural confuſion and obſcurity of their own ideas, are uncertain to which ſide the preference ſhould be given, I ſhall, with all the accuracy and ingenuity of which I am poſſeſſed, at the ſame time, with great humility, ſubmit to you the arguments on both ſides of the queſtion. Arguments ſo delicately poiſed, ſo equally balanced, as to leave you like a flock of aſſes, incapable of forming any judgment on the matter, or of determining which ſide of the queſtion is entitled to preference.

Yet,

Yet, I confeſs, there is nothing I dread more, than to leave you in a ſtate of ſuch liſtleſs apathy and uncertainty. Rather would I inflame you to ſuch virulent altercation among yourſelves, and againſt each other, that the proper object of your reſentment may eſcape; like an arch-traitor who eſcapes with life and fortune by a lucky quarrel ariſing between the houſes of Peers and Commons. For, if I miſtake not, before I ſhall bring this treatiſe to a concluſion, I ſhall have acquired the reſentment, indignation, or contempt of every individual in this ſociety.

I ſhall begin by giving the opinions of different philoſophers concerning it. Almoſt all authors hold, that my ſubject comprehends and embraces all nature; yet among this ſect a very dangerous ſchiſm has ſprung up, ſince thoſe philoſophers, who are preſently eſtabliſhed as orthodox by the public laws of the ſtate, hold that my ſubject is the womb of all nature; whereas thoſe, who, for theſe many centuries, have been reputed heterodox, maintain, that it is the grave in which all nature ſhall be eternally buried and extinguiſhed; or, in the words of Pliny, 'The laſt and eter-
'nal night, which ſhall deſtroy both
'the

'the Gods and the world together.' The former, aſſerting that all things were made out of *Nothing*; the latter, that all things ſhall turn into *Nothing*; and, like the baſeleſs fabrick of a viſion, leave not a rack behind.

Ye who are ſo minutely acquainted with the writings of philoſophers, who, like the induſtrious bee, have laboured through the works of ſcience, and extracted knowledge from every page, know well what oppoſite and contradictory tenets are maintained by thoſe venerable ſages; therefore, it will not ſurpriſe you, that another ſect of this illuſtrious

ſtrious body abſolutely deny our exiſtence, and maintain, with headſtrong blindneſs and unparallelled effrontery, that there is no ſuch object or quality exiſting in nature as that which I have choſen for the ſubject of this night's ſpeculation; that it is merely a negative quality, or, in other words, what is meant to ſignify an abſtract from all poſitive qualities exiſting in nature. To uſe argument with ſuch hardened infidels, would, in my opinion, be equally abſurd as to attempt to charm the deaf with the harmony of muſic, or the blind with the beauty of colours. Therefore, I ſhall leave them confident in this aſſertion,

aſſertion, that my ſubject alone (whoſe exiſtence they deny) can illuminate their underſtandings or melt their hearts.

Indeed, according to the beſt of my knowledge, this ſubject has given birth to more diſputes, altercations, and inquiries, than all other queſtions, moral, phyſical, religious, political, or literary.

My obſervations lead me to comprehend the generality of mankind in two claſſes. Thoſe who are ſo immured in the fleſh, and ſo attached to corporal enjoyments, that they neither

neither believe the exiſtence, nor, if they did, would reliſh the enjoyment of any pleaſure beyond the gratification of the groſſer appetites. And thoſe who, through cold conſtitution, barren imagination, and no very good heart, heightened by the inſtillment of prepoſterous principles, and by a continued habit of affectation, pretend to undervalue and deſpiſe the enjoyments with which bountiful nature has encouraged us to promote the welfare and exiſtence of our ſpecies, and, in their ſtead, have reared up a ſet of fantaſtical, extravagant, wiredrawn notions of pleaſure, too refined for human appetite, which no-

where exiſt but in thoſe brains where coldneſs, darkneſs, and confuſion, wandering, or rather ſtammering, through a narrow and crazy habitation, have engendered them.

As our affections commonly influence our judgment, I take it that people of the firſt of theſe diſpoſitions have ranked themſelves with that claſs of philoſophers who hold matter to be the grand and eternal principle in nature; and that our ideas and ſenſations are nothing more than modifications of matter; for inſtance, that ſympathy and antipathy are attraction and repulſion, obſtinacy

obſtinacy coheſion, ſtupidity gravitation, the appetite between the ſexes magnetiſm, paſſion the principle of inflammability, &c. And thoſe of the laſt mentioned way of thinking have placed the ſtandard of their faith on ſpirit alone, have agreed to aboliſh matter altogether, that it is no more than an union of qualities conceived by the mind, and that the notion of a ſubſtratum to theſe qualities is quite abſurd. So theſe philoſophers, between them, have baniſhed both matter and ſpirit; and, beſide the ſubject of our preſent diſcourſe, have left nothing in nature.

The oppoſite ſects, who have thus differed about the empire of Nothing, and debated whether it comprehends matter or ſpirit, diſpute, with equally virulent altercation, about the property of other two immenſe regions, each of them contending that his favourite territory is exempted from our dominion, but that the other is ſubjected to our authority; and the terms of hereſy, folly, and impiety, are heartily bandied about among them. Theſe vaſt regions are, Time preſent, and Time to come; or, to uſe the more emphatic names of theſe philoſophers, who promiſe themſelves large territories

territories in the laſt of theſe mentioned countries, Time and Eternity.

The materialiſts hold, that it is our buſineſs not to be gaping and ſtaring, and deliberating how we are to travel the next ſtage, and thereby tumble in a ditch, and break our legs by not obſerving the road that lies immediately before us; more eſpecially, as we are utterly ignorant, what ſort of a country this ſame Eternity is. We know there lies a very wide ocean between that country and this. We know alſo, that multitudes of emigrants are daily going thither, who, by the bye,

bye, notwithſtanding all the hard-ſhips they complain of ſuffering in this poor country, never leave it till their leaſes are expired.

That, whether it is owing to all the veſſels being ſhipwrecked in the paſſage, or to the delight which our countrymen take in their new abode, or to their being ſcalped and roaſted by the natives, as is the cuſtom with the ſavages in America; it is certain, that not one perſon has ſo much as been reported to have returned from it, for theſe ſeventeen hundred years, and beyond that period hiſtory is dark and fabulous. This has raiſed ſo high the

the inſurance of veſſels bound for that country, that a cunning old fellow, with a triple crown on his head, and a parcel of keys jingling by his ſide, who pretends he is nearly related to the King of that country, draws bills payable at ſight upon a large premium advanced, by which means, poor ignorant people are cheated out of their money. And, even in thoſe countries, where the old Rogue's tricks are ſeen through, there is a certain claſs of people called Prieſts, who, though they do not abſolutely draw bills on that country, yet aſſure the emigrants that their word will be taken as better caution than the old Rogue's

Rogue's bills; and, for this good word of theirs, they accordingly are liberally rewarded.

The ſpiritualiſts again aſſert, that the pleaſures and vexations of this world, which is another name of the country called *Time preſent*, are abſolutely below the conſideration of a reaſonable creature; that they are to be reputed as Nothing; that the ſole intention of our being ſent into this country was, that being apprentices *here*, it might be known what ſort of journeymen we would make *hereafter*. Then proceeding to argue in a mathematical manner, they tell us, there are certain data

or

or firſt principles founded on the moſt obvious truths, which being granted them, they will, by a cloſe chain of reaſoning, demonſtrate the truth of their main propoſition: That the only poſtulatum they require, is this ſimple one, That mankind ſhall continue to live to all eternity; and then it will follow, indiſputably, that the longeſt period on record of our continuance on this ſtage, does not even bear a jot in the ſcale of proportion, when compared to eternity: Or, in other words, that Time preſent is Nothing, and that Eternity ſhould be the perpetual object of our deſires and actions.

Having delivered the arguments of theſe profound philoſophers, in ſupport of their different tenets, it is with the utmoſt ſubmiſſion and deference that I offer my opinion on this point of controverſy, as I am extremely unwilling, to draw on myſelf the reſentment of either of theſe furious bodies.

In my notions then, they are both in the wrong; for, in the heat of altercation, they have overlooked one region ſo immenſe, that it is utterly out of the power of men and angels to deſcribe its extent. Here it will be proper to give my learned readers a ſmall ſketch of geography, that

that they may be the better enabled to determine the value, and adjuſt the property of theſe great kingdoms. Let it be remembered then, that Time preſent conſiſts in actual enjoyment, that Time to come is centered in hope, and that Time paſt is lodged in the memory. Now, this country called Memory is frequently obſcured with miſts, eſpecially after ſtorms of paſſion, which totally eclipſe the proſpect of Time paſt; and the warm altercation of theſe philoſophers had raiſed ſuch a miſt in the atmoſphere of Memory as altogether obſtructed their view of that country.

That

That Time paſt is a part of our ſubject, is a ſhadow, is Nothing, appears to me ſo evident as to require no proof to convince you of it: That time preſent is ſomewhat different, is on ſome occaſions much better, and on other occaſions greatly worſe than Nothing, appears equally evident. As for Time to come, it may, or it may not be Nothing, juſt as we come to it. All I ſhall ſay on this head is, we know how we are, we know not how we may be; and poſſeſſion is better than expectation.

I am extremely happy, that, beſides thoſe grand, important, and ſolemn

ſolemn objects which I have already ſhewn to be a part of our ſubject, I can alſo include thoſe trifling airy and unſubſtantial beings called Words; which are univerſally allowed to be Nothing, even to a common proverbial ſimile, 'That 'words are but wind;' for we can only compare things to ſuch objects furniſhed by nature as bear the ſtrongeſt analogy and reſemblance to thoſe with which they are compared. Accordingly, when a perſon hearing or reading thoſe magazines of words, entitled Sermons, pleadings, diſcourſes, new's papers, pamphlets, diſſertations, treatiſes, inquiries, criticiſms, &c. is aſked what

what they contain, generally gives for anſwer, 'Nothing at all;' yet the fertility of modern genius, incited by the moſt illiberal and avaricious motives, claimed boldly an excluſive property in thoſe airy unſubſtantial beings; and ſupported that claim by a ſtrange diffuſe jargon of metaphyſical nonſenſe.

I embrace, with great pleaſure, this opportunity of appeaſing the perſons who advanced this claim, by rectifying an unlucky and moſt erroneous opinion which they formed, 'That their claim was depiſed, 'and rejected by the ſupreme court 'of juſtice;' whereas, in fact, they obtained

obtained what they aſked; for, as they craved a property in words, and, as words are Nothing, Nothing was accordingly granted them.

My ſubject alſo comprehends a certain ingredient called *Falſehood*, which bears ſo large a proportion in every compoſition invented by the mind of man, that it is univerſally allowed to include in it all religions but one, and to find out that bleſſed one, has been an object of the moſt obſtinate, violent, and bloody contention; and, after all the noiſe and buſtle that has been made about it, it is twenty thouſand to one againſt any religion that has ever been profeſſed

ſeſſed or eſtabliſhed on the face of the earth. It alſo includes a great part of philoſophy, hiſtory, travels, narratives, aſſertions, and declarations, eſpecially if confirmed upon oath. Falſehood has been equally prevalent in hiſtorical compoſition, whether it has repreſented facts, or aſcribed motives inducing to the actions of its perſonages, or beſtowed profuſe encomiums on the moderation of an upſtart ſect, who, with every mark of violence, that zealous fury could inſpire into bigotted minds, dethroned and expelled their ſovereign, violently attempted to murder their next ſovereign, while ſitting in the ſupreme

preme court of juſtice, countenanced the actual murder of their third, and baniſhed their fourth ſucceeding ſovereign; laid in aſhes every edifice ſacred to God; edifices, which, ſuppoſing them deſtitute of all reverence to the Deity; yet might have claimed reſpect as monuments of the antiquity and grandeur of their country, and of its loftineſs in architecture.

That falſehood is truly Nothing, will appear evident without argument, upon my ſubſtituting a ſynonymous term in its place, to wit, *fiction*, or, as the Houyhnhnms, who had no word in their language to

ſignify falſehood, expreſſed themſelves, 'That which is not.'

Having proved the non-exiſtence of Matter and Spirit, Time and Eternity, and other important objects, I ſhall point out a few of the beneficial conſequences reſulting from theſe grand diſcoveries. It will be productive of peace and harmony between thoſe great powers of the Mind, Imagination and Reaſon; by finiſhing all diſpute about the infinite extenſion and diviſibility of matter, which reaſon holds to be demonſtrably true, but of which imagination rejects and abhors even the idea. It will alſo diminiſh the labour

labour of thoſe uſeful and reſpectable members of ſociety called Metaphyſicians, in whoſe praiſe I can never ſufficiently ſpeak, by removing a wide field of inquiry, which they have long cultivated with unwearied labour and moſt refined ſubtilty; namely, 'how 'Matter and Spirit act upon 'each other;' an inquiry altogether ſuperfluous, now that I have ſhown there are no ſuch objects in exiſtence. Further, it will ſave future Kings and Emperors, when compoſing a code of laws, the trouble of inſerting a title, 'De 'haeretico comburendo,' and of prohibiting the peruſal of ſuch eſſays as this, 'Quae non per omnia

'ac

'ac praeciſe congruentes expoſitae 'orthodoxae fidei,' by the following ſanction, 'His qui talia ſcripta 'aut tales libros habere, aut legere 'ſuſtinuerint, ultimum ſupplicium 'experturis.' It will ſilence all diſputes about the thirty nine articles. But, what gives me inexpreſſible joy, (being a zealous proteſtant,) it will aboliſh the inquiſition. Not to make account of the many millions of lives it will ſave, by preventing cruſades, conſpiracies, and maſſacres, in favour of religious controverſy.

It is by no means ſurpriſing that this our ſubject, which I have ſhewn

to

to comprehend almoſt all nature, ſhould be the object of general purſuit. So pliant is our ſubject, ſo various are its charms, that it has engaged the affections of innumerable votaries of the moſt oppoſite characters. The idle, the induſtrious, the hermit, the libertine, the prodigal, and the miſer purſue it with equal ardour. Not, indeed, in its natural colours, for theſe are dark, gloomy, and diſconſolate; but under the various and artful diſguiſes which it has aſſumed.

It is the ſtudy of a life-time, to determine between things and their appearances, between Something and

and Nothing; for there are ſo many inchanting diſguiſes covering Nothing, that infinite numbers have been deceived, and have purſued the bubble till they landed in utter ruin. Daily experience teſtifies how apt we are to be miſled by appearances, and miſtaken in our notions. Objects truly valuable in themſelves are frequently ſhaded by an external appearance, that by no means prejudices us in their favour. To confirm this, I might bring inſtances of men of profound judgment, and conſcious integrity, who, from timidity and aukwardneſs, ſeem to be fools; of virtues, which, from the high degree of reſtraint and ſelf-denial,

nial, requiſite for exerciſing them, appear odious and diſguſting; of exquiſite diſhes, which, from their homely appearance, promiſe but courſe fare; of the moſt brilliant gems, which, from their rough coats, ſeem to be worthleſs pebbles. Innumerable inſtances of this abound in the animal, intellectual, and moral world.

Now, thoſe objects and qualities, which are of themſelves moſt deſpicable and hateful, aſſume the ſemblance of their correſpondent virtues, and frequently put on a much more beautiful and inchanting diſguiſe. Thus prodigality pretends

to

to be generoſity; avarice, frugality; hypocriſy, religion; tyranny, the ſteady exertion of ſupreme power; anarchy and rebellion, liberty and public ſpirit.

To be employed about Nothing, or, in other words, to enjoy *otium cum dignitate*, pleaſure and repoſe uninterrupted by the drudgery of buſineſs, is the ultimate object of our keeneſt purſuits and deſires. As pleaſure, when perſonified, is reckoned a woman; ſo, when Nothing aſſumes the diſguiſe of pleaſure, ſhe puts on the female ſex. She is either a whore or a virtuous woman. If a whore, ſhe yields to your

your firſt addreſſes; her charms enervate you with liſtleſs indolence; you cannot, for one moment, ſhake yourſelf looſe of her voluptuous embraces; your time, your perſon, and your fortune are waſted in her ſervice, till, at laſt, by an aſſimilating power, which ſhe poſſeſſes, they are converted, or dwindle to Nothing. Gallantry, with this whore, is termed '*idleneſs* and *diſſipation* in 'youth.'

But, if a virtuous woman, ſhe is not to be won, but by hard labour; you muſt toil ſeverely the greateſt part of your life, before ſhe will favour you with a ſmile of approba-

tion; ſhe will not ſuffer you even to touch her perſon; ſhe puts you on performing the moſt arduous and dangerous exploits; as oft as you return, worn with fatigue, and confident of merit, ſhe urges you on to repeated labours; till, at laſt, this capricious woman, when premature old age, the fruit of ſevere labour, has enfeebled and exhauſted you, receives you into her embraces with the moſt eager affection: But, alas! by this time, you are incapable of reliſhing the charms of your miſtreſs, or wine, love, and joy, which ſmile in her train. Marriage, with this honourable woman, is termed

termed 'A fortune acquired by la-
'bour and induſtry.'

I muſt likewiſe obſerve, that ſhe has been known to take a ſudden and early affection for the moſt deceitful, rapacious, and abandoned of men, and to have beſtowed more liberal favours on ſuch miſcreants in their youth, than worthy men, who have devoted their whole lives to get her as a companion, have ever been able to obtain.

Our ſubject demands love and eſteem, not only as an amiable miſtreſs, but as a firm and affectionate friend. For, when friends and fortune

tune fail us; when we are bereft of every poſſeſſion and enjoyment; when the fountains of life are exhauſted, and the fluttering ſpirit quits its mortal frame; when we deſcend to the dreary abodes of darkneſs and oblivion, Nothing is our companion and our portion forever. We brought Nothing into the world, we will take Nothing out of it; like a faſt friend, it accompanies us through the wide ſeries of eternity.

As a prudent travelling governor, whether he conſults the health,

health, inſtruction, or amuſement of his pupils, will be careful not to waſte them by very long journies, but will reſt at proper ſtages, where they may *bait their horſes, eaſe and refreſh themſelves*, and recollect what has paſſed through their obſervation; ſo ſhall I, like a prudent author, ſenſible that the attention of many of my hearers will be worn out by the inſipidity, and that of ſome of them be diſguſted by the harſhneſs of the pages we have travelled through; yet, I hope, even thoſe among you who are moſt verſant in the literary world, will not pretend that we are walking in a beaten track; I ſay, I ſhall here make

make a digreſſion, which is the diverſorium that long-winded authors prepare for the refreſhment of their jaded readers; a refreſhment the more neceſſary, as our ſubject is not yet half exhauſted. The ſtage then I put up at, (I mean the ſubject of digreſſion), is not a very good one; it is not frequented by princes, prelates, or nobles; by the wiſe, the opulent, or the great; the poor, the dull, and the ignoble are ſeldom to be found in its precincts. I muſt confeſs then, though it has long enjoyed conſiderable reputation, though its fame has been celebrated by the recommendation of an illuſtrious ſojourner of old, it is very

ill

ill frequented, indeed much leſs ſo than the world believes; for, like the bucks and bloods who deſcribe exploits in taverns and bawdy houſes which they never entered; ſo many people pretend they have lodged in our inn, and received excellent accommodation, who were never within many degrees of it.

You will readily perceive that this our reſting place is Humility; a very extraordinary one for an author. But it is ſtrongly ſuggeſted by the ſubject of which we are treating; for, what can be more humiliating, than to think that the grand theatre of the univerſe which ſurround us, the

the material world which we feel, the ſpiritual world which we hope for, the endleſs ages of happineſs which we promiſe ourſelves, are all mere phantom and deluſion, in ſhort, are Nothing, or will ſpeedily be converted into it; that man himſelf is ſprung from Nothing, or from the vileſt and moſt periſhable materials, and will ſpeedily be converted into Nothing? I ſpeak not of our bodies, for that they are duſt, and that to duſt thy will return, is moſt indubitable; but I ſpeak of that more aetherial part, whoſe exiſtence conſiſts in perception, and yet which is ſuppoſed to exiſt when perception is obviouſly extinct.

After

After having proved that Matter and Spirit, Time paſt and to come, are all merely Nothing, I cannot help thinking that thoſe gentlemen have little candour, and are rather addicted to cavil, who require any further proof that the ſoul both ſprung from Nothing, and will ſpeedily end in it. However, to ſilence ſuch obſtinate and conceited people, I ſhall here proceed to ſhow that the ſoul is vegetable, by authorities and quotations, rather than by arguments.

Firſt then, the great Chriſtian Poet tells us:

——————Flow'rs, and their fruit,
Man's nouriſhment, by gradual ſcale ſublim'd,
To vital ſp'rits aſpire, to animal,
To intellectual; give both life and ſenſe,
Fancy and underſtanding; whence the ſoul
Reaſon receives, and reaſon is her being.

A Poet, who is allowed above all others to be moſt intimately acquainted with human nature, gives the following account of it:

This is the ſtate of man; to-day puts forth
The tender leaves of hope, to-morrow bloſſoms,
And bears his bluſhing honours thick upon him;
The third day comes a froſt, a killing froſt:
And when he thinks, good eaſy man, full ſurely
His greatneſs is a ripening, nips his root.

The

The Pſalmiſt, ſpeaking of a good man, and conſcious of his vegetable origin, ſays, 'He ſhall be like a tree 'planted by the rivers of water, that 'bringeth forth his fruit in his ſea-'ſon; his leaf alſo ſhall not wither, 'and whatſoever he doth he ſhall 'proſper. As for man, his days 'are as graſs, as a flower of the 'field ſo he flouriſheth, for the wind 'paſſeth over it, and it is gone, and 'the place thereof ſhall know it no 'more.' The prophet Iſaiah, ſpeaking of the vengeance of God againſt the Aſſyrians, ſays, 'And 'the light of Iſrael ſhall be for a 'fire, and his holy one for a flame: 'And it ſhall burn and devour his 'thorns

'thorns and his briars in one day;
'and ſhall conſume the glory of his
'foreſt, and of his fruitful field,
'*both ſoul and body.*' And we are told by the Apoſtle, when ſpeaking of mankind, that 'The ax is laid to
'the root of the tree; therefore e-
'very tree which bringeth not forth
'good fruit is hewn down and caſt
'into the fire.' It is certainly on account of our being trees, that fire is prepared to conſume the ſtem of the wicked.

As an undeniable proof, that the talents and ideas of our mind are acquired merely by eating vegetables, our moſt holy religion aſſures us,

us, that knowledge grew on a ſort of apple tree, of which our mother ate; and therefore we ſhall all be damned. However dangerous that tree might have been in days of yore, whatever ſtrong temptations it might have given to our forefathers; yet, I cannot help thinking that their poſterity might have been truſted with it, in all manner of ſafety; for if by knowledge is meant uſeful knowledge, and a really ſolid and juſt way of thinking, it appears that the generality of people, with whom I have had the honour to be acquainted, are ſo directly the reverſe of our common mother, that they would rather be

damned

damned than they would learn any thing, or be at the pains to acquire any ideas or principles diſtinct from traſh and nonſenſe. I can only account for this ſtrange reverſe, by ſuppoſing, that, ſince God has removed the diſh, he has alſo been gracious enough to take away the appetite. And here, as I am well aware of the degeneracy of the times, and the general propenſity to infidelity, I muſt be pardoned for a very ſhort argument in favour of the celebrated ſtory of the tree of knowledge; an argument, in my opinion, more powerful than any that have been offered by Tillotſon,

Clark,

Clark, Butler, and the other champions of chriſtianity.

We ſee daily that ſtupidity, rage, love, hatred, and ſometimes wit, brilliancy, and good fellowſhip may be acquired by drinking: Now, to alledge that it is more prepoſterous or abſurd, to ſuppoſe that knowledge may be acquired by eating, appears to me perfect cavilling. Accordingly, thoſe who delight in good eating are ſaid emphatically, *Scavoir vivre.*

Women and flowers are held univerſally to be the ſame, and to be merely convertible terms; though indeed

indeed ſome of ruffian diſpoſitions have looked upon them, not as flowers, but as weeds, and treated them accordingly. Hence the poet:

You took her up a little tender flower,
Juſt ſprouted on a bank, which the next froſt
Had nipt; and with a careful loving hand,
Tranſplanted her into your own fair garden,
Where the ſun always ſhines; There long ſhe flouriſh'd,
Grew ſweet to ſenſe, and lovely to the eye,
'Till, at laſt, a cruel ſpoiler came,
Cropt this fair roſe, and riffled all its ſweetneſs,
Then caſt it like a loathſome weed away.

And the wife of the gloomy King of Terrors is expreſsly mentioned, by Milton, as being a flower.

Nor

——Not that fair field
Of Enna, where Proſerpine gathering flowers,
Herſelf a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis
Was gathered.

When Clymene pulled the branch of a tree, ſhe wounded her own daughter, who called aloud to her,

Parce, precor, Mater, quaecunque eſt ſaucia clamat,
Parce, precor: Noſtrum laniatur in arbore corpus.

And Urban the Eighth, ſpeaking of the encounter between Apollo and Daphne, repreſents him as ſhaking hands with the branch of a tree:

Quiſquis amans ſequitur fugitivae gaudia formae,
Fronde manus implet, baccas vel carpit amaras.

And I have read of floriſts, although I cannot recollect where, who conſidered a bed of tulips as a collection of painted ladies. By the bye, if they are not the ſame, they at leaſt reſemble each other ſo ſtrongly, that, in beds, either of them may be enjoyed to the greateſt perfection; and when they are once plucked, once enjoyed, their beauty withers, and their value is greatly diminiſhed.

But,

But, to finiſh all controverſy on this head, though the pride of individuals leads them to give themſelves out as ſomething higher than the vegetable tribe, liſten to the unguarded confeſſion which extremity of grief forces from the beautiful Malvina. 'I was a lovely tree 'in thy preſence, Oſcar, with all 'my branches round me; but thy 'death came like a blaſt from the 'deſart, and laid my green head 'low. The ſpring returned with 'its ſhowers, but no leaf of mine 'aroſe.'

Neither can the male ſex boaſt an exemption from the tribe of plants;

plants; for a poet, to whom the ſtock-dove lent melancholy murmurs, and the owl dullneſs and ſolemnity, with the admirable talent of foreboding miſchief, addreſſing himſelf to gentlemen *flouriſhing* in the gay ſcenes of life, ſays,

Ye well arrayed! ye lillies of our land!
Ye lillies male! who neither toil nor ſpin.

And we learn in Hudibras, that certain ſoils were formerly much infeſted with ſoldiers;

For ſoldiers heretofore did grow
In gardens, juſt as weeds do now.

That not only ſoldiers, but celebrated generals of antiquity, and perſons

perſons of remarkable beauty, became flowers, is teſtified by Ovid, who informs us, that Ajax, Hyacinthus, and Narciſſus, were converted into flowers; and that a whole race of people ſprung from muſhrooms, a fact confirmed by proverbial ſayings to this day. For, when upſtart people, ſprung the Lord knows whence, make themſelves conſiderable by the plunder of Indian Nabobs, or a German war, they are immediately termed a *muſhroom family*.

So univerſally is it allowed that the human ſpecies are nothing but flowers, that, in ſpeaking of either

ther ſex, when in the higheſt ſtate of perfection, they are ſaid to be in the *bloom* of youth and beauty.

On the ſame account, genealogiſts, when tracing a perſon's deſcent, have always recourſe to *the tree of the family*; and the celebrated Blackſtone, treating of ſo grave and important a ſubject as the laws of ſucceſſion to the imperial crown of theſe realms, mentions the *root and branches of the royal family*. Alſo, a political ſet among us, who diſtinguiſhed themſelves by their firm attachment to hereditary right, repreſent the death of Charles the Firſt by a felled tree,

and

and his three ſons, as branches iſſuing from it, adorned with crowns. And the amorous monarch, when he fled before the Uſurper, recollecting his near alliance to a venerable oak, took refuge in its arms; and the oak, with uncorrupted fidelity, and inviolable ſecrecy, ſcreened his Majeſty from thoſe who thirſted for his blood.

I muſt here obviate an objection which may occur to thoſe who have not ſtudied this queſtion ſo minutely as I have done, namely, That man is not a flower, but rather a ſoil where flowers may grow. Accordingly, thoſe gardeners of mora-

lity

lity and inſtruction, called Profeſſors, ſome of whom I have now the honour to addreſs, talk of cultivating the mind, and being careful, that, in a rich luxuriant ſoil, weeds be not ſuffered to ſpring up and choak the ſeeds of virtue. But they are guilty of an overſight; for the qualities and defects in the mind grow by ingrafting; thus, when we ſpeak of a wicked man, we ſay, vicious principles are ſtrongly ingrafted in him.

Having ſaid ſo much, I hope my preſumption will be pardoned, in expecting great applauſe for having ſtrengthened the cauſe of humility,

mility, by reſting it on an entirely new and well-grounded foundation; namely, the baſeneſs of our origin, our ſoul's being Nothing, and ourſelves ranking no higher in the claſs of beings than the vegetable tribe.

This I have demonſtrated, if arguments drawn from our daily expreſſions, ſupported by the authority of many profane authors, who have ſtudied nature in all her variety, and confirmed by the ſanction of the holy ſcriptures, ſhall be held for demonſtration.

I muſt entreat, that the candid,

judicious, and learned hearer will here take the trouble to reflect on the various theories and ſyſtems which he has peruſed in the different branches of natural and moral philoſophy, of divinity, medicine, (and that I may not provoke by neglect the reſentment of the men of law), of juriſprudence, whether the authors on this branch have complimented their works with the title of treatiſes, 'De jure naturae 'et gentium,' or, 'Commentaries 'on the laws of this or the other 'ſtate;' and in theſe ingenious compoſitions have gravely informed their readers, 'What ſort of laws 'the Almighty might have preſcri-

'bed

'bed to his creatures;' or, when treating of the origin of property, they, with admirable ingenuity and ſagacity, explained, '*The only true* '*and ſolid foundation of man's do-* '*minion over external things:*' I ſay, I entreat that he will reflect on the theories and ſyſtems with which he is moſt converſant in, and determine with himſelf, whether nineteen out of twenty of them are not ſupported by more diſtant analogies, more trivial reſemblances, and more futile arguments, and corroborated by leſs reſpectable authorities, and leſs applicable quotations, than thoſe by which I have eſtabliſhed the vegetable ſtate of man.

It

It is time I ſhould conclude this digreſſion, by inquiring ſhortly into the origin of flowers, which will bring me preciſely to my original ſubject. To trace their origin then to the golden age, which is the fartheſt I am able, I find

'Placidique tepentibus auris
'Mulcebant zephyri natos ſine ſemine flores.'

Now, if flowers do not ſpring from the ſeed, it follows, that they ſpring from Nothing, that is to ſay, from the ſubject of this diſcourſe. If a little wit may be pardoned in ſo grave a ſubject, I hope the flowers will preſent a grateful odour to thoſe

thoſe for whom this noſegay is prepared, and, in the end, may adorn the brow of their father.

That you may underſtand the ſucceeding part of this treatiſe, it will be proper to give you a hiſtorical anecdote concerning our ſubject. In days of yore, there were two very great and powerful families, ſaid to have been originally ſprung from the ſame ſtock, which the ſimilarity of their names ſeems to confirm. Theſe were Something and Nothing. They are ſaid to have been the iſſue of Plenty and Scarcity, who are the offspring of Induſtry and Idleneſs. Theſe have not become extinct like moſt

moſt ancient families, but ſtill flouriſh and overſpread every corner of the earth.

An early family-feud ſprung between them, ariſing from a natural diverſity of qualities and diſpoſitions, which ſoon grew to ſo extravagant a height, that they formally renounced all intercourſe with each other. For inſtance, if any of the family of the Somethings followed the learned profeſſions, to wit, if they became lawyers or phyſicians, and were conſulted about any of my poor family when in diſtreſs, they declined to viſit us, profeſſed that we were the object of their mortal

mortal averſion, and flatly refuſed to give advice *for Nothing*. If, again, they were divines, ſtill not a whit more charitable; they refuſed to pray for us, and always buzzed in our ears a favourite maxime of theirs, 'That godlineſs was great gain.' If merchants, they entered into a non-importation and non-exportation agreement againſt all our countrymen; yet we have been known to bite them ſeverely in this article; they refuſed to buy or ſell with us, and have been known, times without number, to let their goods rot in their warehouſes, rather than barter them with any of our family. In ſhort, they could not

not bear the ſight of each other; and whenever the one came into any company, the other immediately left it.

The inveterate feud between thoſe ancient and powerful families, has been productive of the moſt important events, and ſurpriſing revolutions, although entirely overlooked by the ſhameful blindneſs of hiſtorians, even when they deſcribed the facts that occaſioned them. It was this which produced the fierce conteſt between the fat and lean kine which diſturbed the ſlumbers of Pharaoh. It was the irreſiſtible force of our dreary empire, which required

required the interpoſition of the divine arm ſcattering quails and manna, to ſave the Iſraelites from deſtruction.

To endure the preſence of our ſubject, which is more peſtilential than the breath of venemous Hydra, or to introduce the rival family in its ſtead, has afforded ample opportunity for exerciſing the moſt perſuaſive miracles, miracles the moſt pleaſant of any, becauſe they filled the bellies of believers; the hiſtory of which is never read to the devout and hungry, without producing an earneſt deſire to ſee the experiment repeated.

It was the feud between thoſe powerful families which occaſioned that irruption of Northern Barbarians which overwhelmed the Roman Empire. In ſhort, ſcarce has the brazen trumpet ſounded rival nations to arms, ſcarce has a ſovereign ſtretched the rod of oppreſſion over his hapleſs ſubjects, ſcarce has fraud and injuſtice been committed between man and man, but what aroſe from this *irreconcilable difference* between Something and Nothing. Nay, even when the ſeeds of war ſprung from no ſordid and avaritious motives, when nations fought for glory alone, ſtill, with the utmoſt propriety,

ty, may they be ſaid to have been fighting about *Nothing*.

Now it muſt be obſerved, that there are certain parts and appannages of the human body, which have always found it exceedingly troubleſome and dangerous to be poſſeſſed by the family of Nothing. Of theſe the chief are the brain, the belly, and the pocket. To deſcribe the various ways in which Nothing obtains poſſeſſion of the brain, would exceed the bounds of this diſcourſe, and beſides, would pre-occupy a favourite work, which I intend ſoon to compoſe, being extremely well qualified for the undertaking, namely,

ly, a diſſertation on Madneſs, with its cauſes remote and proximate, and its aſtoniſhing operations and effects; in which, as Doctor Young proved the love of fame to be the *univerſal paſſion*, ſo am I to demonſtrate Madneſs to be the *univerſal principle* regulating mankind, and to ſhow how intimately the paſſion and the principle are allied. Therefore I ſhall briefly obſerve, that there are certain ſutures or openings in the heads of children, which require, at their birth, to be carefully and accurately put together by the midwife. Now, through the unſkilfulneſs of female practitioners in the obſtetric art, it frequently happens that

that certain crannies are left in the ſkull, through which the particles of the brain being fermented, the moſt refined part of the ſpirit flies off, and, beſides dregs, Nothing remains. Another moſt powerful cauſe of madneſs, is a certain light, penetrating through thoſe crannies, beſt known by the term Illumination, which dazzling the weak nerves whereon it is darted, like heaven's bleſſed beam, turns vinegar more ſour, and produces abſolute frenzy.

There is ſtill another very potent cauſe of madneſs, to wit, the emptineſs of the pocket; for, when Nothing

thing is in the pocket, the brain becomes diſtracted at ſeeing its mortal enemy encamped ſo near it; upon which, deſerting the garriſon, it ſurrenders to Nothing. To ſhow that the brains will not keep their poſt, when Nothing is in the pocket, let me obſerve, that in thoſe conſtitutions, where, by the natural groſſneſs of the materials, they can not ſpeedily evaporate, the owners of them, on diſcovering the dreadful calamity of an empty pocket, by a violent operation, blow out their brains at once, with aſſiſtance of a loaded piſtol.

I muſt here expoſe the malevolence

lence and injuſtice of a remark which has generally prevailed in moſt ages and nations, that a ſordid ungenerous reſpect is ſhewn to riches, which ought naturally to be paid to wiſdom, benevolence, fortitude, and other ſuch amiable qualities and diſpoſitions; whereas it being eſtabliſhed by long experience, that the brains are diſordered when the pocket is empty, the ſtate of the pocket has therefore been attended to by every judicious obſerver, as a thermometer for determining the heat of the brain; accordingly, as this thermometer riſes or falls, reſpect or contempt follows the owner, as poſſeſſing or being deſtitute of every earthly qualification or bleſſing.

The

The connection between the pocket and the belly is ſo intimate, that whenever the belly diſcovers Nothing in the pocket, whereby its ſupply of ammunition being totally cut off, it is obliged to ſurrender for famine. Thus the prudent generals of the houſe of Nothing commonly begin their attack upon the pocket, being ſure that, if it is reduced, the head and belly will ſurrender of courſe. But, as oppoſite cauſes frequently produce the ſame effects, it happens, on ſome occaſions, that an overflowing pocket will produce as extravagant madneſs as ever proceeded from an empty one.

Among

Among the moſt diſtinguiſhed characters in which my ſubject has appeared, beſides thoſe already mentioned, are the perpetuum mobile, the philoſopher's ſtone, and the grand elixir; things which never did, and never can exiſt in nature, except in its almighty Parent alone. Nothing, under ſome of theſe diſguiſes, for many centuries, occupied almoſt the whole learned world, and produced millions of volumes. It became the object of general attention under other appearances ſomewhat ſimilar; ſuch as witchcraft, judicial aſtrology, and the myſtical power of numbers; on the laſt of

which I muſt be indulged in a few words.

One would imagine that figures or numbers were in themſelves as ſimple, innocent, and harmleſs beings as any whatever; indeed they are things which have no poſitive exiſtence in nature, but only are names or ſigns uſed to denote the relative quantity and proportion of things. Yet theſe philoſophers conceived a ſtrange myſtical power in certain favourite numbers, which they imagined could operate very powerful effects on natural bodies.

Among the numbers which engaged

gaged the greateſt liſt of votaries, Three, Seven, and Nine have born the palm. The worſhippers of Nine obſerve, that there are nine Muſes, nine daughters of Pierus changed into chattering Magpies, nine orders of bleſſed angels, nine lives in a cat; that children go nine months in their mothers belly; and that Hell is nine times ſurrounded by the river Styx.

The worſhippers of Seven obſerve, that there were ſeven wiſe Men; ſeven Jewiſh Brethren fried to death by a cruel tyrant, becauſe they would not eat bacon; ſeven years that Nebuchadnezzar champed

ed thiſtles on a common; ſeven wonders of the world; ſeven ſleepers; ſeven days in the week; ſeven golden candleſticks; ſeven ſtates of Greece; and the ſeven United Provinces.

But the worſhippers of *Three* have been much more numerous than thoſe of its rival numbers. They have boaſted, that there are three Graces, three Infernal Furies, three Judges in Hell, three Sleeping witneſſes of the transfiguration; three diſtinct parts, compoſing the Britiſh Legiſlature, King, Lords, and Commons; three grand enemies of our Conſtitution, the Pope, the Devil,

Devil, and the Pretender; three abodes of mankind, Heaven, Earth, and Hell; three ſeats in the Playhouſe, the pit, the boxes, and the gallery; three Cardinal virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity; three adverſaries of our ſalvation, the Fleſh, the World, and the Devil; three powers of the mind, Imagination, Memory, and Judgement; three genders, Maſculine, Feminine, and Neuter; three diviſions of time, Paſt, Preſent, and to come; three diviſions of matter, length, breadth, and thickneſs; three notations of quantity, weight, meaſure, and number; three inhabited elements, earth, air, and ſea; three ſenſes.

I make no doubt but I ſhall here be accuſed of having ſuffered my arrogance to mount to a moſt extravagant pitch. Not ſatisfied with having repreſented almoſt every thing which is held to be important and ſacred, as futile and trifling, I have dared from the little (I mean the few) ſenſes that you have, to curtail almoſt a half. But, although I have to combat a prejudice which has been ſanctified by the acquieſcence of all ages and nations, I am hopeful I ſhall demonſtrate, in very few words, that there are three ſenſes alone, and that we may with equal juſtice aſſert, there are ſeven, eight, or any other number of ſenſes, if

we

we once admit more than three. There are then the ſenſes of ſeeing, hearing, and feeling; for taſting, which has been vulgarly reckoned a diſtinct ſenſe, is nothing elſe than the flavour of an object, impreſſed upon the delicate papillæ of the tongue and palate; and ſmelling is nothing more than the volatile effluvia exhaling from an object touching and impreſſing the olfactory nerves; which, therefore, are both of them branches of the ſenſe of feeling. Which ſenſe, by the bye, if it muſt be parcelled out into branches, poſſeſſes infinitely more poignant ſenſations than thoſe of taſte and ſmell; and which therefore may with

with much greater propriety challenge to themſelves the rank of diſtinct ſenſes. I ſubmit with confidence, that there is a wider difference between being ſcorched by fire and certain feelings which ſhall be nameleſs, than there is between the taſte and ſmell of a diſh of meat or bottle of wine; yet theſe have been reckoned diſtinct ſenſes, while thoſe have been reputed branches of the ſame.

Having thus demonſtrated, that there are only three ſenſes, and alſo eſtabliſhed the ſuperiority of three above any other number, I will finiſh my remarks on this ſubject, by obſerving, that there are certain people

people who have a ſtrange hankering after number one. This, I preſume, ariſes from the reſpect and complacency with which every individual treats his own proper ſelf; and it has often been obſerved, that people have gratified this number, in trifling ſatisfactions, at the expence of the ſafety and proſperity of thouſands. Therefore having conceived an affection for number One, at the ſame time conſcious of the undoubted ſovereignty of number Three, they advance a doctrine which at firſt ſight appears paradoxical, namely, that Three are no more than One, and that One is as many as Three; which however is indiſpu-

tably true, ſince three feet make no more than one yard, three groats than one ſhilling, and three taylors than one man; and that one yard is equal to three feet, one ſhilling to three groats, and one man to three taylors.

If any of my learned hearers wiſh to attain the art of decyphering myſtical numbers, I ſincerely recommend to him to peruſe 'Obſervations upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypſe of Saint John,' which will unqueſtionably afford him ſufficient matter for admiration, and which, I aſſure him, would be greatly

greatly injured by any quotation or excerpt whatever.

My ſubject may be viewed in one light which renders it truly amiable, and that is, the great encouragement it gives to induſtry; for Nothing is the daily employment, and alſo gives daily bread to many. That great numbers are daily employed about Nothing is evident; and, upon accurate obſervation, it will be found that many more are employed about it than appears at firſt ſight. Here it muſt be obſerved, that work may be ſimply done or performed, or it may be done to the purpoſe; ſo there are

ſome

ſome who do Nothing, and others who do Nothing to the purpoſe.

Now let me aſk whether thoſe perſons who are hired to harangue at ſtated times in favour of truth, honeſty, ſobriety, charity, meekneſs, piety, faſting, and prayer; whether thoſe profeſſors who are hired to lecture on different ſubjects to a parcel of giddy boys who do not attend to one word; whether thoſe quacks who invent medicines that cure all diſeaſes which are incident to the human frame, and thoſe who uſe the medicines ſo invented; whether thoſe who write Obſervations upon the prophecies of Thomas the Rhymer,

mer, and his prophetic brethren; whether thoſe ſwarms of authors with their retainers, printers, paper-makers, &c. who have publiſhed ſuch multitudes of volumes that are good for Nothing but ſnuff-paper, or ſtill more ignoble purpoſes; whether thoſe lawyers who write caſes to judges that never read them, and plead before judges who do not attend to a word they ſay; whether again judges who are obliged to ſit and hear lawyers, and thoſe none of the oldeſt, ſpeak on a ſubject, and that none of the moſt important, longer than I am confident it would take to rehearſe the whole orations of Cicero that have been handed down

to

to us: I ſay, whether all theſe are not employed about Nothing, or Nothing to the purpoſe?

The pulpit was the theatre from which long ſpeeches formerly were delivered, but as the learning of the clergy and moderation of the people increaſed, they were ſo ill received, that they took up their ſtation at the bar; but with this difference, that, as from the pulpit they were liſtened to with the moſt heartfelt ſatisfaction, ſo from the bar they are received with diſguſt and contempt. For my part I can compare them to Nothing but tedious wind.

Laſtly,

Laſtly, in imitation of thoſe ſolemn orators who from one of the three wooden machines invented for the convenience of that noble ſcience, harangue againſt our favourite pleaſures, like careful houſewives flapping the flies from a pot of honey, I ſhall inform you where you will find the ſubject of this diſcourſe; only with this difference, that as theſe learned orators prudently ſet out with announcing the ſubject, leſt their hearers ſhould not be able to comprehend what they would be at, or on what they meant to declaim; ſo I ſhall end where they begin, by declaring that the ſubject of this

this discourse will be found in a deaf nut, in which, when it is cracked, you will find NOTHING.

FINIS.